

**Berkley Tree Board
Meeting Minutes
Monday, September 26, 2022**

Present: D. Hennen, S. Young, K. Karlis, S. Bard, M. Grassa, B. Lathrop, M. Leneway, T. Losey, L. Price, H. Tylenda

Absent: L. Fritsch

Additional visitors: Dan Mihaescu

Meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Kathy introduced Lora Price. Lora is our newest member of the Tree Board, replacing Bob Penkala.

Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes –May 23, 2022 meeting minutes approved.

Review and Approval of Agenda – Kathy presented the agenda and members approved as proposed. New items were added to agenda.

Public Comments- none

Update from DPW:

- **Fall Street Tree Planting** – Shawn reported that they are planting 180 trees. Some residents who previously indicated that they wanted trees, changed their minds. D. Mihaescu's Beautification Advisory Committee group passed out additional flyers and helped the City find more interested residents. If the DPW doesn't get interest for the additional 20 trees, they will look at spring plantings, likely as Blvd. trees. D. Hennen asked if there was extra cost for a spring planting, and S. Young said a little bit as they would need to drive and find locations. D. Hennen asked if there were 20 spots available on Blvd's. S. Young said he believes there are. M. Grassa pointed out there were empty tree wells in front of Alex's. S. Young stated trees don't do well there, likely because of where the snow plow driver at Alex's pushes their snow. He said we can try that area again.

K. Karlis pointed out that the fall tree planting is typically done after the first frost. Typically November/December. S. Young responded it has been later the past couple of years. D. Mihaescu asked if passing out additional flyers would help. S. Young said it would and he would rather plant the trees in front of people's houses and save Blvd's as a backup. D. Mihaescu asked if there was a deadline for additional people. S. Young said now, but if he can get more in the next week, that would be ok.

D. Hennen suggested a social media push. S. Young said there was an overwhelming number of orders last year, and when he went back to the people who didn't get a tree and wanted one, only half of the people responded this time.

K. Karlis mentioned we talked in the spring about having people go online for the application and have people make a commitment to take care of the tree. She asked if we have done

anything with that. S. Young said the residents can get the form online and then either email it in or bring it into the office. K. Karlis asked if the form asks for an email address. Generally, the DPW gets the email address from the residents who email them the form, but some residents use the drop box. S. Young stated they could put a spot on the form to get an email address, and if someone uses the drop box instead of emailing the form in, then we would have it.

S. Bard asked if we could email the people several times a year to remind them of tree care. D. Hennen said he doesn't see any reason why we couldn't. S. Bard asked if we could make that a requirement. T. Losey pointed out not everyone has an email address. D. Hennen pointed out this would disfavor those without an email address.

K. Karlis asked if we have the fall tree order into Marine City. S. Young stated we do. D. Hennen asked if people can pick their trees. He said he tells people to contact DPW. S. Young said they usually select trees for a site based on the site's needs. This includes the tree species and tree cover around.

- o **Progress using GIS to document street trees** – Shawn reported that they add all new trees planted to GIS. He said they went thru and re-evaluated all new trees planted from January 2021 to last fall. This was 262 trees. 11 were very poor and 23 that were poor. This is 13%, which is a little higher than the expected 10%. He stated it was a pretty hot dry year. GIS makes this much easier to check up on it. He said there are currently about 500 trees on GIS, and when they check on them, they remove anything attached on the trees.

S. Young said they originally started using a different GIS account and are working with HRC the engineering firm to get all the data transferred over. Hopefully sooner than next year. Every time the DPW goes by, they update the GIS account for that tree and this makes everything easier.

- o **DNR Grant / Berkley budget for trees** – Shawn reported that we put in for the grant into the DNR for \$20,000. K. Karlis said we were originally going to use the money for a tree canopy study. K. Karlis said we no longer need to use this because we are using free tools for a tree canopy study. K. Karlis said we will try to use this money for trees.

S. Young said we asked in the grant for tree assessment, inventory, trimming, tree removal and planting. K. Karlis pointed out this makes the whole fund available. S. young said it was put into general fund and it won't have to be used for roads. K. Karlis said we won't know until spring if we get the funding.

- o **Permeable Pavement Tree Test** – Shawn reported that he likes it because there aren't woodchips floating around. He doesn't like the color because it looks like pavement. T. Losey asked how the trees are doing. S. Young said the trees seem to be doing alright, but there is a drip irrigation in the sample areas. He said it was a good start but he is not sure how it will do with trees that aren't irrigated. He said it is pretty open, and when you put water on it, it disappears.

D. Hennen asked why it mounds up around the tree. S. Young said it was because of the root flare on the tree. He wishes it were flat. He is also interested in seeing how it handles the winter. K. Karlis asked when the test would be complete and ready for an update. S. Young said likely buy mid-summer next year.

Tree Care Flyer for Newly Plant Trees – Dan Mihaescu, Chair of the Beautification Advisory Committee, presented a Tree Care Flyer that has been created to aid in the care of newly planted trees. The flyer currently has two versions. The idea for this came from the City of Troy where a newly planted tree came with a flyer that introduced the tree in a personified way. It said, “Hi, my name is (tree type), nice to meet you” and had care instructions on the back. The back kept with the same personification.

D. Mihaescu asked if it would be ok if the tree planters wrote down the tree type in the blank on the form when they planted the tree. S. Young said that wouldn't be a problem. D. Mihaescu asked to compare the two flyers. He said he prefers the style on the front of one and the tree care instructions on the back of the other. The watering instructions included were from English Gardens. The use of personification is to help people get more attached to their tree, take better care of it and what to expect.

D. Mihaescu asked if we had any thoughts and suggestions. T. Losey asked about removing tree stakes and tape. S. Young said the DPW will continue to do that. D. Mihaescu said once S. Bard confirms some of the extra content of the tips and stuff, 250 copies can be made and delivered to S. Young. S. Young said that would be fine, and they could be handed out when the trees are entered into the GIS, likely a week behind planting. D. Mihaescu asked if this would be attached to the tree or a door hanger. S. Young said a door hanger would be better. M. Leneway pointed out if it was put on the tree, the rain could damage it.

D. Hennen pointed out the contact info should be changed from the Berkley City Council to the DPW as they would be handling any situations with the tree. The Tree Board agreed to use the front of one form and the back of the other form for the final copy. K. Karlis was concerned about door hangers and 1/3 of doors not having a place to put them. D. Mihaescu said he has multiple ways to deal with this. D. Hennen suggested plastic bags. S. Young said he will get them on the doors. D. Mihaescu said he would like to have them ready for the fall tree planting. S. Bard said he will get him the additional necessary information shortly. K. Karlis thanked D. Mihaescu for taking this on.

Tree Canopy Study – Following our meeting in May, Shawn received notification from the Michigan DNR that free web-based tool called i-Tree Landscape was available for us to do our own tree canopy study. Kathy and Tricia used this tool to develop a tree canopy study for the city of Berkley. The tool allowed the neighborhoods of City of Berkley to be subdivided by U.S. Census blocks, which can mostly be aligned with the five zones used by the DPW to define the city neighborhoods. Later in the summer, Tricia discovered another newer free web-based tool called The Tree Equity. The Tree Equity, provided by an organization called American Forests, considers other factors besides canopy cover to try to help

prioritize tree planting areas to neighborhoods. With follow up, it was determined that i-Tree Landscape under reported Berkley's Tree Canopy and that The Tree Equity provided newer and higher resolution data for assessing the existing tree Canopy in Berkley.

Lawrence Sobson, from Michigan's DNR Urban and Community Forestry team advised us to use The Tree Equity for the canopy percentages but to retain the tree benefits reported in the i-Tree Landscape tool as this is good information.

Because the canopy targets are established based on population density to try to assess plantable areas in urban areas, The Tree Equity Scores were developed for our census utilizing three different Tree Canopy targets: 32%, 40%, and 48%. This resulted in several anomalies when comparing scores between census blocks and cast doubt on solely using The Tree Equity scores to prioritize Berkley's neighborhoods.

Therefore, the priorities for each census block are developed using existing canopy percentages only. In Berkley, the census block existing canopy ranged from 26% to 41%.

K. Karlis recommends we look at neighborhoods with the least trees being the ones with the we look at to put trees rather than use the tree equity score, which changes prioritization based on several other factors including age/race/unemployment, etc. She thinks a neighborhood shouldn't be passed over for another when they have approximately the same canopy cover.

K. Karlis asks if we should set a tree canopy target for 40% for the City of Berkley. T. Losey says she likes it. S. Young points out that should be a minimum standard.

K. Karlis asked if we should prioritize using the tree canopy percentages as a guide. She doesn't want to neglect the areas that are already at 40%. Door hanging efforts could target areas with a lower percentage.

S. Young points out areas around the rec centers where multiple blocks of ball fields are driving down the percentages. This could cause there not being room to plant trees in some areas. K. Karlis pointed out we haven't run out of room yet. S. Young said he needs the tree board guidance on where to plant trees, but he doesn't want to deny anyone a tree if they live in a certain area and want one. D. Mihaescu said it is a matter of manpower and being able to prioritize the manpower to canvas a neighborhood and pass out flyers and that's why they need direction.

S. Bard suggested using this as a guide but because the data is 6 years old, to use it in conjunction with the GIS & other qualitative data. T. Losey pointed out you are always going to run into problems with a snapshot in time for data.

K. Karlis asked if we think the Tree Board should do more with the community when it comes to planting trees on private property. Many on the board agreed. D. Hennen pointed out the city can only plant on public property. T. Losey pointed out there are sapling giveaways in other cities.

D. Mihaescu asked if there was anything we could do about planting trees in the cemetery. S. Young thinks that would be difficult because their ground is valuable. D. Hennen said the cemetery had new owners and they are very receptive to discussing things. S. Bard said that would be a lower priority for him because he doesn't go in there or drive by the cemetery. D. Hennen said he has had meetings with the cemetery to discuss opening it up for more public access, potentially making it into an auxiliary city park. D. Hennen pointed out the part of the cemetery bordering Coolidge has more trees because it was once part of St. John Woods subdivision that didn't sell off, so the cemetery bought it.

M. Grassa asked if the city still has tree sales to private people. S. Young said it has been a few years since they have done that and it was complicated. The tree was bought from the city but if the land owner wanted it planted, they had to pay Marine City to plant. The DPW would deliver the tree into the backyards and didn't know where to drop the tree off. He said it was a big headache.

K. Karlis recommends we put together priorities when we meet in January on what we can do next year. She thinks we should consider what efforts we can do to encourage residential plantings whether it is tree give aways, or other programs.

K. Karlis said according to the tree equity score, we would in Berkley need to plant 1612 more trees to get to the overall score. K. Karlis feels if we are planting a couple hundred more trees a year, we are on target to get to the overall score. S. Young pointed out we also lose trees every year, but for the past few years we plant more trees than we take down.

K. Karlis pointed out that some of our neighborhoods have a lot of rentals and she thinks a lot of the rental properties don't have a lot of trees. D. Mihaescu asked if there is a way to communicate directly with landlords. D. Hennen said rentals must be registered, so there is.

D. Hennen asked if we can throw out athletic field areas. K. Karlis said we don't have the data broken down by more than census block. D. Hennen suggested getting a percentage for athletic fields and subtract that from the census blocks. K. Karlis pointed out it isn't just the fields, but parking lots and businesses. D. Hennen said parking lots are incentivized by the city to plant trees, even though it doesn't do well. S. Young pointed out young trees don't have much canopy and aren't contributing much to the canopy cover.

D. Hennen said merging the data sources will help with that and allow us to make better decisions where we are planting the trees.

Public tree “Tribute Tree” donations: Following our May meeting where it was decided to discontinue the current Tribute Tree Program, it was proposed that a city fund be established to allow citizens to contribute to public trees.

Dennis proposes the Tribute Tree Program be redefined to allow contributions to a public tree fund with special certificates provided to all tributes.

The tree board discussed and K. Karlis asked if there should be a minimum to contribute to get a certificate and suggested 50 dollars. M. Leneway pointed very few people are likely to donate below a 50-dollar limit, and those few people shouldn't be excluded. D. Hennen said there wouldn't be a minimum and if it becomes a problem, we can revisit this.

D. Mihaescu asked if they would go to City Hall to do this. D. Hennen said yes. K. Karlis asked who would issue the certificates. D. Hennen said possibly the City Manager. D. Mihaescu asked how someone walking into city hall would make sure a donation for a tree would go to that specific fund. D. Hennen said there is a specific tree fund. If a developer tears down a tree on public property and doesn't replace it, they must put money in this tree fund, and we can utilize the same fund, which is used for planting public trees.

K. Karlis asked if the next step is to discuss this with the City Manager. D. Hennen said yes. K. Karlis said after we get this ironed out, we can put this on the Tree Board website (or DPW Forestry website) to communicate this with the public.

D. Hennen said there could be an argument that private contributions into a segregated fund could be used on private property, so if there was a fundraiser with a significant amount raised, and the city attorney approved, it could be possible to have sapling giveaways. K. Karlis said this could be an Arbor Day event. D. Hennen said the downsides are higher failure rate for smaller trees, trees not getting planted, people would take trees and resell them, etc.

D. Hennen will check with the City Manager regarding this proposal to allow tribute tree contributions for public trees and report on this next month.

City Tree Ordinance Updated (Invasive Species) - Following our May meeting, Dennis also reviewed the changes he proposed to the City Tree Ordinance which also included invasive species, and these were approved. The City also approved become members of Oakland County's CISMA.

D. Hennen said the city is starting to enforce then invasive species portion of the City Tree Ordinance. D. Hennen is pressing them to look at a public education campaign targeted to identify the invasive species. D. Hennen urged the Tree Board to report it if we notice anything. D. Hennen said because the city joined CISMA, we are using them as a resource for generating communications and sharing with people how to control invasive species along with putting people in touch with contractors to assist if they need that.

D. Hennen said there will probably be social media pushes to communicate information about invasive species. He said if the City finds an invasive species on your property, they are going to work with you and give you lots of time to fix it.

M. Leneway asked if there were only 4 trees on the list. D. Hennen said there were only 2, Black Locust and Tree of Heaven. M. Leneway asked about Buckthorn and pointed out they were listed under the shrubs but were a small tree. D. Hennen said they were then covered because the law states that it needs to be on Oakland County's list.

Other Topics not on the agenda – None

Meeting adjourned at 8:27 p.m.

Next meeting is scheduled for October 24, 2nd Floor Conference Room, Public Safety Building.

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